CHAPTER 15

SECTS AND HERESIES

The religious evolution of Iran during the centuries from the Arab conquest to the rise of the Saljuqs was determined by a number of factors which, so far, have not been adequately isolated and analysed. A religious history of Iran during this period still lacks data and analyses to enable the student of the history of religions to make a religious typology, and to differentiate its internal structure and verify its socio-political connections. In dealing with heterodoxy in Iran, the difficulty of focusing on problems is further compounded by the fact that, in most instances, one cannot rely on contemporary sources, which might be properly characterized as "heterodox", as free expressions of the antithesis to the official religious set-up of Iran following the Arab conquest. The oldest and most exhaustive work on Shī'ī heresiography, Naubakhtī's *Firaq al-shī'a*, only dates from the 4th/10th century.

One is thus faced by interpretations which are biased from the very beginning, due to the strongly felt need of condemning heresy and keeping it at a safe distance so as to leave no doubt as to the "orthodox" soundness of the sources. Alternatively, most of the material employed reflects the centrally oriented and Islamic views of the caliphal empire, within which Iran, as any other province, was a mere ramification of a single, powerful centre which was bound, by the nature of things, to peripheral repetition of its basic modules and patterns.

By concentrating on one area or province one can attain a more realistic, although possibly still universal vision, which is important for a number of interrelations between the various areas or provinces, and above all takes into account whatever each area more or less consciously chose to preserve, in a "national" sense as one might say today, out of the supranational whole of aims and interests which the caliphate's Islamic ideology expressed in different occasions and forms, within the territorial boundaries of the caliphate.

A not merely religious but even more simply historical understanding of the revolts documented in Iran primarily during the 'Abbāsid period, and of their underlying theories, requires some consideration of those

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factors which allow one to reconstruct the socio-economical, political and hence religious texture of caliphal Persia.

One cannot, of course, aim at a detailed and specific analysis of such factors, which would lie outside the scope of this essay, but only by starting with a few general remarks on the history of Persia during the period in question can one understand two main currents of thought which, though inadequate to describe the complexity of the phenomena in question, are complementary to each other. One can identify the politico-economical dimension of these rebellions and heresies, and at the same time single out a few recurring and typical traits deserving the attention ot the student of Iranian religious phenomena.

The first indispensable element of such an enquiry is the need of interpreting the religion of Iran at the time of the conquest; i.e. "religion" and not "church"; for the Mazdaean church of the Sāsānian age does not seem in itself to have provided all the religious and social developments inspired by the ancient Persian religion. Not only does this "unofficial" Iranian religion need at least approximate definition, but the Iranian heresies *par excellence* of pre-Islamic times, such as Manichaeism and Mazdakism, should be considered against its background as well as that of the official state religion. The picture would, however, still appear limited and restricted in its historical implications if its scope were not extended to include the whole phenomenon known as Iranian gnosis, which seems to consist in a synthesis of disparate, not strictly Iranian elements. All of these elements, in our view, can act as a framework for the study of the region's transition to an Islamic ideology (it being still too early to speak of conversion to Islamic monotheism as a well-defined religion).

The second basic factor is the economic and social situation of Iran at the time of the conquest. It seems essential to discern in Persian social texture the opportunities for penetration by an external element, in this instance the Arabs and the ideology they brought along with them. One could establish the external element's rôle in setting up a new internal economic and social structure, which was not necessarily innovating but did provide local unrest and endemic demands with a new form of expression, disguised under the camouflage of a new external contribution, and yet substantially not different, for the time being, from traditional forms. This factor can only be determined through a point-by-point analysis of the Arab conquest's stages. The

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central government's attitudes and reactions as the conquest proceeded are an important factor in clarifying the problems.

A third necessary element, more strictly connected with religious enquiry, is a definition, however approximate, of the Shī'a, which avoids the classic models proposed by traditional heresiographers and generally accepted by students. Such models, in fact, artificially reduce the Iranian religious outlook to a pattern which ultimately depends on the so-called Shī'ī religious conception, viewed almost as an Iranian discovery, or rather the Iranian response to Arab Islam both in the Islamic formulation of the theory of power and, even more so, in its mass religious manifestation.

These factors might together define the field of enquiry: the meaning of the "Iranian substratum" from the religious point of view; the nature of the social and ethnic elements making up Iran; and the new synthesis formed after the coming of Islam onto the Iranian plateau, or rather the nature of the new religious outlook to which Shī'ī heterodoxy contributed.

The first point, however, is extremely tenuous. Reference is often made to the rapid collapse of the Sāsānian empire before the thrust of the first invading Arab armies. That the traditional forms in which power found expression in Iran underwent some sort of collapse is fairly obvious. Whether this coincided with an actual breakdown of Iran's socio-economic structures is not entirely clear. There *was* the collapse of a dynasty and of a church, the Mazdaean hierarchy being allied with, and sharing in, official power, but the landowning and merchant class which wielded economic power underwent no obvious upheaval. The conquerors introduced a religion, as well as a language which was its most obvious vehicle, but they did not force them upon the country. This is in itself a democratic and egalitarian trait; but being conscious of his own material interests the Islamic missionary did not encourage his new subjects toward a condition of parity, while he allowed them a theoretical freedom of choice by granting them a clearly defined juridical status and thus obtained the desired economic results. Any conflict in extending the sway of Islam to Iran at first was hardly felt at all. The important consideration was that the right of control should stay in Islamic hands; apart from that the traditional structures were left unchanged and were actually used by the conquerors for a long time.

The Iranian world thus preserved its own "Iranian" character; the

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innovation consisted in ending allegiance to the official aristocratic and reactionary church, oppressive by its own quality of court church and, more generally, by the artificial aspects of its cult.

What the Iranian masses believed, and how they expressed themselves in the religious field, is still not clear. The two great movements known to us, which seem to have enjoyed popular support, were Manichaeism and Mazdakism, both directed primarily against the official church. Naturally enough the Mazdaean church of the Sāsānians stubbornly opposed them. This is not to say that a number of Iranian, which we may call Mazdeo-Sāsānian, elements did not find expression in attempts at creating a new religious alternative. The concept of light and darkness, for instance, were poles of a constant dualism within which the Mazdakite catchwords of social justice also found their ideological place.

Unfortunately, however, popular religious feeling can on the whole only be assumed and derived from the negative formulations aimed at official Mazdaism, and from those historically documented rebellions which are Iranian in their dynamism and in the messianic mythology to which they are related most of the time, though already Islamized. One might add the subsequent need of providing the elements of their own myth with historical sanction. It should be noted, however, that the latter circumstance reflects an atmosphere not so much of "conversion" as of reduced religious pressure; in other words, such a constant feature of Islamic religious outlook as the need to provide every suggested element with historicity before making it operative, was bound to be accepted first as a form of liberation from absolute patterns handed down from above as symbols of religious manifestations, and secondly as a platform for actual adhesion to the Islamic creed. Though lacking direct sources, we do have literary and annalistic references, and it is quite obvious that in Firdausī or Asadī no less than in Ṭabarī or Tha'ālibī ancient myth is historicized to the point of persuading us that by A.D. 1000 this process was already long concluded.

In this sense, it is precisely in the field of religious politics that the convergence of Iranian subjects towards Islam was presumably so widespread as to include Christians and Jews in the Sāsānian empire. In this connection, interpreting the Shu'ūbiyya as an ethnico-religious development (Arab versus non-Arab, Muslim versus non-Muslim) does not seem justified. On the contrary, this was possibly a typically Islamic way of voicing claims and demands, according to a dynamic process

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which placed on the same political plane positive (autonomous) and negative (not necessarily Arab Bedouin) definitions within a system which was wide enough to tolerate such an organization of dissent without serious danger.

It seems obvious that an atmosphere which was less repressive and at any rate more amenable to stimuli, however disparate these might be, should have allowed the recovery – in a strictly religious sense – of mainly hidden undercurrents of Iranian mentality leading to a gnostic syncretism of Judeo-Christian origin, filtered by Iranian mythological structure.

Regarding the second point, it is obvious that by the conquest of Iran one does not mean in this connection the battles of Qādisīya or Nihāvand, which were merely landmarks attesting, among other things, the ability of Arab caravans to pursue their commercial interests in safety and ensuring control over eastern routes. One should consider the history of a few Iranian provinces of Umayyad times with reference to their adjustment to Islamic power and their occasional attempts at independence. From this point of view the most interesting provinces are Fārs, Khurāsān, Sīstān, the Caspian area and, to a lesser degree, Āzarbāījān, whose vicissitudes are connected with the campaigns against Byzantium. The starting points of the Arab armies on their way towards Iran were Baṣra or Kūfa and the eastern provinces' fate became tied to Iraqi politics, and the unrest of the Mesopotamian cities repeatedly found echo and support in the eastern part of the empire.

After 29/650, when 'Abd-Allāh b. 'Āmir, having pacified Fārs, headed toward Khurāsān with Nīshāpūr as his goal, we find a succession of military waves radiating out from Iraq to reach ever further east towards Transoxiana and Farghāna. Arab garrisons were left in Khurāsān to act as bridgeheads for subsequent campaigns, which were not so much expeditions of actual conquest as plundering forays towards Sīstān and the Oxus provinces. Initially, therefore, the Arabs acted as supervisors and new managers of the caravan routes to China, but by 47/667 the governor of Baṣra, Ziyād b. Abīhi, had already established in Khurāsān without modifying their tribal structure 50,000 families from Kūfa and Baṣra, mainly of the Banū Qais, Tamīm and Banū Azd tribes, with the purpose of consolidating previous conquests and establishing a reservoir of manpower for future campaigns. Marv became the Arabs' general headquarters, and not all of the local Arab

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colony was engaged in warlike activities. This was the beginning of the process of acculturation and of Arab penetration into the existing Sāsānian structures of Iran, which gave birth in Khurāsān to the Abū Muslim faction and was to constitute, in Iran as a whole, an element of potential alliance against the central power in the history of revolts of the times.

There is no evidence of any reaction to the Arab conquest in the guise of popular rebellion, but we do know of many local uprisings in response to each new Arab campaign, organized and directed by the ancient landowning class, such as the short-lived Nīshāpūr and Balkh rebellion of 32/653 led by Qārin, a certain Sāsānian nobleman.[1]

We are thus faced with a common trait in the history of Arab conquests: on the one hand conservation of the existing administrative order (the *dihqāns* and *marzbāns* being entrusted with the task of tax gathering); on the other hand the speedy participation of the Arabs in local politics led them to an anti-Umayyad rôle. The Damascus government repeatedly tried to exert direct control over Iran and particularly Khurāsān by resorting to administrative pressures, for a centralized form of administration had been introduced by 46–50/667–70. The administrative division introduced by Ziyād b. Abī Sufyān, which subjected the finances of Khurāsān to those of Iraq, should be viewed in this perspective. Furthermore, Damascus regularly quartered in Khurāsān Syrian troops, disliked by the locals who had to bear the ensuing financial burden, as well as by the settled Arabs who had to submit to their control. Umayyad politics thus proved ineffective as far as the Iranian territories were concerned, and only such a governor as Ḥajjāj succeeded in enforcing them. As a matter of fact the acts of the governor of Khurāsān often proved incompatible with the central government's policy, both in taxation (regarding the proportion due to Damascus, as well as the degree in which their administration fell to local authority), and as regards recruiting the local population into the Arab military structure. The latter problem, of course, was connected with the former insofar as the question existed of whether to grant or not the inscription of the *mawāli* on the rolls of the Iraqi *dīvān*.

To all this one should add the conversion problem. At first taxation was kept on a *per-capita* basis to the landowners' benefit, which makes one wonder about the historical authenticity of any alleged Arab policy of conversion in the area. Such a policy materialized only under excep-

[1] Cf. M. A. Shaban, p. 26.

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tional circumstances, as under 'Umar II, or when the Umayyad caliphs extended to Arab landowners the obligation of *ḵẖarāj*.

In the eastern areas of Iran economic power was shared between the Arab conquerors and local merchants. In the patchwork of anti-Umayyad alliances between the Arab settlers and the local wealthy classes, commercial capital played a special rôle; it was placed at the central authority's service when this promoted new campaigns to safeguard the security of the major caravan routes. Such was, for instance, the rôle of the merchants of Khwārazm or Soghdiana, where our sources bear witness to the presence of well-organized foreign colonies among the local traders. On the other hand capital was directed to local parties whenever trade required a policy of peace and good neighbourliness rather than aggression.

This then is the context which provided ample scope for the political and organizational capacities of Abū Muslim, whose name cannot be omitted from any typological analysis of the Iranian, or more particularly Khurāsānian, rebellions of the first centuries of the caliphate.

During the first decades of the Arab conquest, the elements to be stressed in terms of a typological survey seem to be essentially four. First, we find the unchanging presence of a landed aristocracy acting as large estate owners, and also a lesser farming aristocracy which held titles to their estates against payment of taxes and generally took the lead in anti-Arab risings. Second, there was a wealthy merchant class which generally supported and promoted local political initiatives. Third, we find an Arab colony of more than military nature settled in Khurāsān with clearly defined local interests similar to those of the merchants and lesser farming aristocracy. An important example of this was Mūsā b. 'Abd-Allāh b. Khāzim's revolt which secured local support. Finally a popular layer was free, at least in principle, from any direct influence exerted by the new Islamic ideology, through the setting up of new administrative structures, and hence seems to have maintained many old Iranian traditions.

Another problem is the meaning which should be attributed to the Shī'a during this period. As far as official power is concerned, the active opposition party – whether initially anti-Umayyad or subsequently anti-'Abbāsid – seems to exhibit those features which are normally associated with the Zaīdi form of Shī'ism. In other words, political Shī'ism envisaged a seizure of power, and envisaged it in terms of armed insurrection. The fact that this was later codified through the

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theory stating that the caliph should not be appointed by universal consent, but on the basis of his military victory over any competitors, is not fundamentally important from the point of view of political practice, inasmuch as it amounts to an *a posteriori* motivation of a political attitude. This theory may even go back to remote ideological roots in a form of *ghulūw* (extremism) which was later denied and contradicted by the Zaidite movement itself. Devotion to the cause which found religious expression in the Kaisānites' extreme beliefs, whose inheritance was most fruitfully exploited by the 'Abbāsids themselves, seems on the other hand to have evolved around a few fundamental, typically Islamic themes, a cultural and religious framework which was to provide substance and nourishment for Twelver-Shī'ī and proto-Ismā'īlī religiosity with its doctrines and beliefs which are often and incorrectly considered as borrowed from the Iranian world.

Such a statement does not, of course, rule out the countless opportunities for the recipient of a religious message to interpret and pass it on according to well-known patterns; but this should not deter one from considering as purely Islamic the concept of *Ahl al-bait* (the prophet's family), and the process of *waq'a* undergone by a given historical figure, which is thus moved to a symbolical level. This process was to be variously acted out by those Shī'īs of Iran who were members of a more or less radical wing of Shī'ism, but its origins are nevertheless to be found in entirely Arab surroundings centring on the figure of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya.[1]

If one were to generalize the notion of Shī'a, with some risk of inaccuracy and bias, one might say that every Shī'ī-inspired upheaval of the first two centuries of Arab conquest, whether it be Mukhtār's revolt or the rising of the Rāvandīs, shows Zaidite connotations in its exoteric aspect, as far as its goal and the organization of ways and means to achieve it are concerned. All revolts show also Qur'anic and "proto-Islamic" religious connotations, even those of the Qarmaṭīs or the 'Abbāsid revolution. For the extreme religious element stems from an originally Islamic mould to the extent in which the Qur'anic message itself is viewed as deriving from and re-interpreting the Hellenistic-Christian-Iranian gnostic culture of the age. A more peripheral, less Islamic, possibly Iranian character seems on the other hand attributable to the constant social pressure which found expression in revolts which

[1] Naubakhtī, pp. 48–50.

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appear to be linked by a common denominator even when inspired by strictly non-ghulūw-affected principles, as in the case of the Khārijites in Sīstān.

In this connection the vicissitudes of the Shī'a in Iran must claim a place apart in our analysis of Iranian upheavals and heretical theories. By this we mean not so much the vicissitudes of Zaidite Shī'ism, which as regards its diffusion in the north of Iran was an expression of 'Abbāsid political will, as those connected with the formation of a proto-Ismā'īlī platform in Persia and those pertaining to the religious inheritance left by the Iranian revolts which we shall deal with in the wake of what we propose to call the local expression of Shī'ī, particularly Imāmite, religiosity.

The most intense period of such upheavals covers roughly the second century of the Muslim era. As already mentioned, the change of dynasty may be considered a symptom of many social troubles in the caliphal empire. Khurāsān in particular became a disappointment to the 'Abbāsids, gathering a number of elements of discontent among the local people. This continued to the end of the 'Abbāsid caliphate, when the continuity of socio-religious protest seemed to give way to a more far-reaching and pervasive organization of dissent, such as the Ismā'īlī and subsequent military-heretical-mystical movements. An actual chronicle of the Iranian revolts of this period lies outside the scope of this chapter, but we shall try to consider their political and social development by analysing their factual background before proceeding to a religious interpretation.

The first movement which should be mentioned is the Bihāfarīd revolt (129/746–7 to 131/748–9). The sources referring to it are primarily Ibn Nadīm, Tha'ālibī, Bīrūnī and Khwārazmī, as well as the heresiographers, particularly Shahristānī.[1] The area where Bihāfarīd b. Mahfurūdīn, a native of Zūzan, began to operate was Khwāf, one of the districts of Nīshāpūr. The religious motives characterizing this rebel's nature will be mentioned later; what should be stressed here is that there is no mention in the available texts of any armed action undertaken by Bihāfarīd's followers. The ensuing repression was cruel, however, which suggests at least some degree of organization. The founder-leader embarked on propaganda, or rather put forward a few suggestions which might roughly be viewed as an attempt at mediation

[1] Ibn al-Nadīm, p. 344; Tha'ālibī, p. 32; Bīrūnī, vol. II, pp. 210–11; Shahristānī, vol. II, p. 71.

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between a Zoroastrian kind of religion – not *the* Zoroastrian religion – and the new creed introduced by the Arabs. He set himself up as a new prophet, and as such had attributed to him a book. The socially significant features of the revolt are three: first, the so-called book of Bihāfarīd was written in Persian; second, one of its operative rules was to maintain the upkeep of "roads and bridges, with the means provided by one-seventh of all property and the fruit of toil"; and third, those who in Nīshāpūr requested Abū Muslim's intervention against Bihāfarīd in the name of common interests were the local *mobad* and *herbad*. Abū Muslim rose to the occasion and asked 'Abd-Allāh b. Sa'īd (or Shu'ba) to capture the rebel. He was caught in the Bādghīs highlands and led in chains to Abū Muslim; the latter had him put to death together with as many of his followers as he managed to capture.

The revolt's context seems to be interpretable as a peasant movement opposed to traditional Zoroastrian–Sāsānian authority. The Persian language was obviously chosen because, unlike the protagonists of Abū Muslim's revolution, the followers of Bihāfarīd were only local people. The traditional Zoroastrian clergy's hostility lends the event a popular dimension and reveals the innovating scope of some ideas suggested by Bihāfarīd, such as the restriction of dowries to an amount not exceeding 400 *dirhams*.[1] Such tenets might have been adopted by the poorer layers of the population, who saw in Bihāfarīd a leader capable of giving these beliefs official sanction, by taking advantage of the possibility of innovations in the government of Khurāsān at the time of transition from one dynasty to another. A peasant context also emerges from the expression of interest in roads and bridges. Such interest would have found quite different expression had the viability of a major trade route been in question, and hence commercial security jeopardized. Again, as subsequently happened more than once, the rebel found refuge in the highlands, and available texts mention few instances of local "collaboration" with the representatives of legal authority.

This movement was important because it led to another, more momentous rising, that of Abū Muslim. In the history of insurrections in Iran, the so-called 'Abbāsid revolution played a primary rôle. Abū Muslim, who was to become a hero of legend and epic, turned into a rallying point for many uprisings which were spurred by his own unavenged death and inspired by his political programme. A popular motif seems to underlie many revolts, but its presence in the 'Abbāsid

[1] Bīrūnī, vol. II, p. 211.

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revolt of Khurāsān is not in our view to be taken entirely for granted. Reference has been made above to the rather fluid political situation existing in Khurāsān. One of the reasons for such a situation lay in a coincidence of interests, which had not always materialized in the conquests of the first period of Islam, between local traders, small landowners and craftsmen on the one hand, and Arabs who had settled in Khurāsān without being completely tied to the Arab occupation army. Such interests were obviously contrary to those which were expressed by the central government, whether Umayyad or 'Abbāsid; by guaranteeing the stability of the existing social structure both had found a natural ally in the great landowning aristocracy entrusted by the caliphate with the task of administering and gathering taxes.

By resorting to present-day political terminology one might say that in addition to a conservative party reflecting landowning interests and deeply rooted in local tradition, though at the same time acting as the conquerors' spokesman, there was a "petit-bourgeois" party which had spontaneously grown out of Arabs and Persians alike on the common ground of hostility to the perpetuation of the landowners' privileges, which were apt to prove even more unbearable and at any rate more final as the occupation continued. Being more susceptible to new ideological influences – even if Arab in origin – the petit-bourgeois party carefully safeguarded its own class interests by protecting the local merchant and artisan economy and even by promoting economic development within wider boundaries, while at the same time refusing all integration into an economy whose centralized guidelines were laid down from outside the country. Such then was the context which provided Abū Muslim with scope for his political manoeuvring. This consisted in exploiting bourgeois conservative interests as well as the demagogical potential of the common people cut off from the political arena. He brought pressures to bear on the big landowners, who had to rely on external support and were threatened with dangerous consequences whenever they could not manage to switch allegiances at the right time. The ally of the great landowners was ultimately identified with the source of established power.

A number of clichés are thus laid open to question, for example, what is the point, when dealing with Abū Muslim's revolt, of contrasting local inhabitants and the Arabs, or linking together mawālīs and the occupiers?

After its semi-clandestine preparation, Abū Muslim's rebellion

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developed along extremely straightforward lines. Once the Iraqi situation appeared ripe and ready for acceptance of the Khurāsānī contingents as liberators, and Syrian discontent rendered an effective counter-offensive unlikely, Abū Muslim raised the black flag of the 'Abbāsids in 129/747 and began military operations, first in the Marv district, then in north-eastern Khurāsān; he appointed himself "*amīr āl Muḥammad*" and set off for Kūfa.

The interesting features of Abū Muslim's revolt are, however, complex and blurred. Abū Muslim's revolt broke out in Khurāsān after a first attempt at fiscal reform by the Umayyad government, following an uprising in Marv (116–17/734–5) which seems to have been aimed against the dihqāns (local lords) who supported the governor (first 'Āsim and later Asad) by the Arabs who had been long settled there and saw their interests threatened both by the newly recruited Syrian units and by the presence of "foreign" communities such as the Hephthalites who, it seems, monopolized a large proportion of local trade. The reform (121/739) was carried out by Naṣr b. Sayyār who appropriately enough was Abū Muslim's main antagonist. One thing that is clearly established is that Naṣr b. Sayyār tried to deprive the dihqāns of control over tax gathering, a development which might be viewed in terms of the local converts' interests, possibly urging them to join in protest, or it may merely represent a new departure in the supervision of power rather than a new way of using power on the governor's part. At any rate things had not changed much by 128/746, and the 'Abbāsid spokesman had ample scope for recruiting a revolutionary army. In such a situation it would be daring to depict the events in alternative terms as a contest between mawālīs and Arab conquerors. The fact that one of Abū Muslim's first revolutionary gestures was the laying down of a new "Khurāsānī" dīvān, which was no longer based on the distinction between Arabs and mawālīs, at least suggests which were the circles considered by Abū Muslim as objective allies in his enterprise.

An analysis of the composition of Abū Muslim's army might shed some new light on the soundness and historical authenticity of an antithesis between the native and foreign, Arab elements, both of which were undergoing a process of mutual integration.

On this point various views have been put forward by European scholars: peasants, Marv mawālīs, Yemenī Arabs, Arab merchant missionaries and so forth are in their turn considered as the prevailing

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element, although it is clear that the hard core of Abū Muslim's force was made up of the *ahl al-taqaddum*, who are none other than the Arab colonists of Khurāsān. Whatever socially inspired indications generally may be drawn, without venturing to select any hypothesis as to the components of the army which led the 'Abbāsids to their power, but accepting them all as possible interpretations, we may consider the revolt along two main lines.

First, the local enemies of Abū Muslim were the big landowners representing the Umayyad government's interests and empowered in their name to exploit both the local and the Arabic population, thus safeguarding their own privileges and time-honoured position of power. This circumstance should not be underrated, as it proved to be a recurring factor in a number of revolts which were directly inspired by Abū Muslim and based on his programme. Second, it would be a mistake, in our view, to equate the demagogical element of Abū Muslim's propaganda with anything substantial, inasmuch as the object of his efforts was not so much the peasant (as one might be led to believe by the Māzyār rebellion) even if Abū Muslim was indeed the dihqān's most direct enemy; it was the trading and landowning bourgeois, who aimed at seizing power and considered Abū Muslim's rôle as more representative of an Islamic state in a process of territorial expansion. The dihqāns themselves, with whom according to Bal'amī Abū Muslim had some contacts, tried to climb onto the 'Abbāsid bandwaggon, particularly after Naṣr b. Sayyār's defeat.[1] In later revolts we can detect the demagogical and pseudo-revolutionary attitude of some members of Iran's landed aristocracy.

A cultural and religious interpretation of the revolt naturally leads one to consider the practical syncretism adopted by Abū Muslim in Khurāsān in his patchwork of alliances. The fanaticism which in the Khurāsān 'Abbāsid revolution seems to be represented by those Arab merchant-missionaries who had followed in the wake of the conquering troops and emerged among Abū Muslim's followers, supported the growth of a local religious spirit which we emphatically consider as belonging to a certain kind of Zoroastrianism, which was not the religion represented by the Mazdaean clergy. On the demagogical level the result of a policy of tolerance, or rather superimposition of assimilable and conspicuously stressed elements, is obvious: it can, at any rate, serve as a starting point for an understanding of the religious

[1] Bal'amī, vol. IV, p. 357.

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theories evolved by the sects inspired by Abū Muslim. Abū Muslim's religious policy, as far as we can reconstruct it, introduced a new connection between the local and Arab "bourgeoisie"; this was the opportunity of welding together local and Islamic beliefs, leading to a religiosity unprecedented even in Islam – a tendency, so to speak, to an extreme Shī'ī development such as the later Ismā'īlī movement. This stemmed from a playing down of internal rivalries and contrasts into a Khurāsānian common denominator, which led, however far-reaching the underlying differences, to a common configuration. This is proved, both by the ever-resurgent revolutionary potential of Khurāsān and by the formation of a Khurāsānian army which even when serving under the central government (as under al-Ma'mun) exhibited a will of its own. The Khurāsānians showed a well-defined ideological configuration exerting a certain weight in giving or withholding support to the ruler of the day.

From a typological point of view, the most significant among the uprisings inspired or justified by Abū Muslim's example was that of the Rāvandīs (141/758–9), which though occurring in Iraq was started, according to our sources, by Khurāsānian soldiers.[1] The life of the caliph al-Manṣūr himself was for a brief moment in jeopardy, as the rebels succeeded in surrounding his palace where no security measures had been taken. Apart from their Khurāsānian origin, the extreme nature of this group's underlying ideas will be dealt with when analysing religious motivations. One factor, however, should be stressed, namely the identification of the enemy as the ruling sovereign, which goes back to the idealized prototype of the leader, as embodied in Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya, that is, the concept of a sovereign who was such because he was divine and was divine because he ruled as a sovereign.[2] This, of course, goes against the theme, beloved in early Islam, of the true prince recognized as such by his subjects, in whose conceptions he could not help but recognize himself. With regard to the Rāvandīs, who incidentally were butchered without a qualm, this did not prevent the occurrence of a number of Zoroastrian motifs in the popular meaning we have given this term.

Within two months of Abū Muslim's death, Sunbādh the Magian raised the standard of rebellion in the murdered propagandist's name (138/755–6), setting himself up as his avenger and heir. According to

[1] Bal'amī, vol. IV, p. 371, and Ṭabarī, vol. III, pp. 129–33.
[2] Naubakhtī, p. 53.

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our sources he had been appointed general under Abū Muslim, had grown rich with him and now claimed Abū Muslim's treasure from the caliph. Nearly all historical sources, from Baladhurī and Ṭabarī to Ibn al-Athīr, mention this revolt, which met with a certain success.[1] According to Sadighi it gave birth to four traditions, which differ somewhat particularly as to its length, and the number of actual followers.[2] Sunbādh is however portrayed by all as a Mazdaean from Nīshāpūr. The route of his propaganda and search for reinforcements is also relatively undisputed: Qūmis, Ray, Ṭabaristān. Niẓām al-Mulk further points out that these places were chosen as being inhabited by Rāfiḍites and Mazdakites.[3] We have thus before us an obvious indication of the prospective recipients of Sunbādh's propaganda, as well as an obvious recourse to Abū Muslim's method of joining Muslim and non-Muslim when faced with the need for common action. For such an orthodox and fanatically anti-Shī'ī author as Niẓām al-Mulk, the meeting ground is provided by heterodoxy; this however did not prevent the movement in question from gaining a foothold even in "Arab" territory, or from taking the daring step of making the destruction of the Ka'ba their pass-word. This union of Muslim and non-Muslim happened, in our view, because common ground was reached through the religious syncretism mentioned above, on the basis of common interest in a decentralization of central power.

The leader's wealth stressed by our sources and the claim to Abū Muslim's treasure do not allow one to bracket this revolt together with other purely "protest" movements. On the other hand Spuler indicates that Sunbādh's followers included mountain dwellers.[4] Though this factor was to become a fundamental one only in later uprisings, it helped to define a new geographical focus, apart from Khurāsān, where rebel forces concentrated and found a hinterland for their operations; this was Qūmis–Ṭabaristān and the Bādghīs mountain area which had already been the scene of Bihāfarīd's activities.

Though the insurrection officially ended with the repression carried out by the 'Abbāsid general Jauhar b. Marrār in 138/756 the movement, or rather certain elements connected with it, survived as in Bihāfarīd's case and were subsequently stimulated and organized by the inheritors

[1] Cf. Ṭabarī, vol. III, pp. 119–20; Ibn al-Athīr, vol. V, pp. 368–9.
[2] G. H. Sadighi, pp. 133–4, 138, 143–4.
[3] Niẓām al-Mulk, p. 182.
[4] B. Spuler, p. 50.

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of the rebel's leadership, without any ideological revision of the underlying motivations.

This supports our hypothesis about a common ground based on syncretism in religion and on opposition to the big landowners, and hence of an anti-'Abbāsid nature, from 131/749 onwards. Even if the official chroniclers of these heresies leading into open rebellion often discriminate between the Abū Muslimiyya and the Khurramiyya, who emerged as protagonists of the Bābak and Māzyār uprisings, they cannot adequately uphold such a distinction when faced by concrete instances.[1] In Sunbādh's case, too, reference is made to the Khurramiyya, just as Abū Muslim continues to provide a signpost even for those movements which are not officially considered linked with him.

Al-Manṣūr's rule saw another uprising similar to Sunbādh's, which also bore the twin label of Abū Muslimiyya and Khurramiyya. This was the revolt led by Isḥāq the Turk, who is also considered a *dā'ī* (missionary) of Abū Muslim's. The most interesting references to Isḥāq are to be found in Ibn Nadīm's *Fihrist*.[2] One is faced first of all with a number of hypotheses regarding Isḥāq, who is variously portrayed as a dā'ī of Abū Muslim's; as an 'Alid descendant of Zaid, or more precisely a son of Yaḥyā b. Zaid, killed in Jūzjān in 125/742–3 in Naṣr b. Sayyār's time, or as a Transoxiana Turk settled in Transoxiana after Abū Muslim's death to work as a missionary among the local Turks, whence his *laqab*; or even as an illiterate person of Transoxiana origins, instructed by *jinns*.

Judging by his name, Isḥāq does not sound like a Mazdaean, but rather like a Jew or Arab. The conflicting reports as to Isḥāq's origin again indicate that such uprisings were non-specific, being neither Mazdaean, nor strictly Iranian or anti-Arab. The fact that Isḥāq's rebellion was one of a number of uprisings sparked by the army of the Khurāsān governors Abū Dā'ūd Ibrāhīm b. Khālid and 'Abd al-Jabbār between 137/754–6 and 140/757–8, does however enable us to classify it. After his death in dubious circumstances in Khurāsān, Abū Dā'ūd was succeeded by 'Abd al-Jabbār. In spite of the former's repression, rebellion still smouldered and 'Abd al-Jabbār had a few of its leaders imprisoned, but the caliph, angered by the lingering unrest, sent in an army led by his son Mahdī. At this stage 'Abd al-Jabbār chose white as his colour and joined forces with the rebels, who since Isḥāq's death

[1] E.g. Naubakhtī, p. 67–8, and Baghdādī, pp. 241, 251.
[2] Ibn al-Nadīm, pp. 344–5.

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were led by one Barāz. Defeat was a foregone conclusion and 'Abd al-Jabbār was handed over to Mahdī's general.[1]

It would be pointless to insist on the social aspects of the rebellion's leadership, since the sources themselves acknowledge the community of interests of the ruling governor and the rebels *vis-à-vis* the central power. If there was a new factor, this was the revival of what had been a major plank in Abū Muslim's and his predecessors' autonomous, Khurāsān-oriented policy, namely a special consideration for Transoxiana and an appeal to the Christian and local trading bourgeoisie based on a common interest in keeping local control out of the central government's hands. This was tantamount to freedom of initiative in the commercial and hence also in the military field, on whether or not to expand, found settlements, form alliances with the infidels and the like. The peasant, alongside a merchant bourgeoisie, is the second constantly recurring factor of the uprisings in question; it is precisely in Transoxiana that a well structured and even culturally defined peasant element is suggested, for instance by the *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*, particularly in connection with the great cotton growing districts and associated marketing areas.[2] In this instance the peasant element, which might elsewhere be viewed as the object of mere demagogical propaganda, could be derived from a more conscious alliance with merchants against the big landowners.

Another conspicuous uprising in al-Manṣūr's time was that of Ústādhsīs (148–51/765–8), which spread through the districts of Herāt, Bādghīs and Sīstān and might indeed be identified as the Bust rising mentioned, without further elucidation, in the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*.[3] References to this rebellion are to be found in most historians such as Ṭabarī, Bal'amī, Ya'qūbī, Maqdisī, Gardīzī, Ibn al-Athīr and Ibn Khaldūn. Its Persian and Khurāsānian leader took up Bihāfarīd's efforts initially in Bādghīs, exactly in the area where Bihāfarīd and his followers had sought sanctuary. The numbers of Ustādhsīs' followers are stated as being about 300,000 men. The task of putting down the revolt fell to a general, Khāzim b. Khuzaima, who according to most sources managed to slay 70,000 rebels.[4] Ustādhsīs himself was however taken to Baghdad and apparently executed there, while another 30,000 people who had been captured together with him were set free. Some sources

[1] Ṭabarī, vol. III, pp. 128, 135–6.
[2] Narshakhī, pp. 11–12, 14, 16.
[3] *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 142–3.
[4] Ṭabarī, vol. III, pp. 355–8.

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state that Ustādhsīs' daughter later gave birth to Hārūn al-Rāshīd and al-Hādī.

Such references to this rising as are available suggest a survival in Khurāsān of Abū Muslim's party, which not fortuitously drew into its ranks, among others, Bihāfarīd's successors, though these had been attacked by Abū Muslim himself. What, however, is more specific, is the persistence of unrest even after the heavy repression to which reference has already been made, not merely in an endemic form, but also in active opposition up to 151/768 with inconstant success and especially with a number of converging local religious alliances as reported in the chronicle of Sīstān.[1]

Muqanna"s rebellion seems however to exhibit the whole gamut of motivation under consideration though the length attributed to the revolt varies from seven to thirteen years in the sources. An exhaustive analysis of the sources and the discrepancies in their information concerning such features as the protagonist's name and the length of the uprising is to be found in Sadighi. Such other details as are provided in turn by other sources should also be viewed not as conflicting with, but rather as complementing, the generally accepted data on the history of the rebellion, and as clarifying its interpretation by the official chronicles which mention or ignore them.

Some of these data are purely religious, but most discrepancies or rather nuances deal with the social context of the revolt. The revolt, whatever its actual length, took place during the first years of al-Mahdī's rule and spread initially to Khurāsān, Marv and Balkh, and later to Transoxiana and particularly to the Kish district. On the protagonist's surname of Muqanna', the veiled one, there is unanimous agreement, while the discrepancies on his own and his father's actual names in available references enable one to formulate a number of hypotheses as to his origin and social condition. His own name was 'Aṭā' according to Ibn Khallikān and Jāḥiẓ before him; his father's was unknown (but according to Ibn Khallikān possibly Dādūya); Hāshim b. Ḥakim was his name according to Bīrūnī; Ḥākim was to be read as Hāshim, once his mission had started, according to Ibn al-Athīr; Hāshim b. Ḥākim was his name according to the *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*, and he was said to have lived in a Marv village, Kāzak or Kāza.[2]

[1] *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, p. 143.

[2] Cf. Ibn Khallikān, vol. II, pp. 205–6, vol. II, I, p. 436; Bīrūnī, vol. II, p. 211; Ibn al-Athīr, vol. VI, pp. 25–6; Narshakhī, p. 63.

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The point of such names as 'Aṭā', Hāshim and Ḥākim and their religious meanings seems obvious enough, but there is no comparable evidence as to his family's social background. His family may have found its way into the Arab administration. His father, who hailed from Balkh, seems to have been an officer in the governor of Khurāsān's army under al-Manṣūr; hence he may have been a native integrated into the new system; at the same time he might have been a Mazdaean, inasmuch as a decidedly Mazdaean origin is attributed to the leaders of the uprisings in question. The name of Dādūya would in fact support such an interpretation.

When dealing with his activity the texts yield more explicit data, depicting him as a laundryman, having also a knowledge of the occult, as a military chief in Khurāsān under Abū Muslim and after the latter's death as the secretary of 'Abd al-Jabbār, the very governor who was later to join Ustādhsīs rebellion.

There would seem to be some likelihood in the hypothesis which views as a topos the ascription of low occupations to anybody who was considered a heretic. This would on the contrary emerge as a positive feature in a Shī'ī environment which we might define, in accordance with our line of interpretation, as belonging to an "Arab" type of extremism, and which, according to the sources, Muqanna' belonged to as a follower of the Rizāmiyya sect, linked with and possibly an offshoot of the Rāvandī.[1] This group supported Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya's claim to the imāmate and the esoteric transfer of power from the latter to the 'Abbāsids through Abū Muslim, whom however the Rizāmiyya held to have really died. During Ustādhsīs' revolt, though with all likelihood in his capacity as 'Abd al-Jabbār's secretary, Muqanna' performed his first *ẓuhūr*, claiming a prophetic mission for himself. He was jailed in Baghdad and later set free, and in accordance with a time-honoured pattern, he was officially consecrated as rebel chief and leader. But whom did he turn to, and who followed him? Let us first of all analyse his socio-political demands. The most explicit words on this subject are to be found in Bīrūnī: he bade himself and his followers obey the laws and institutions established by Mazdak, which in an orthodox source implies a number of clichés such as sexual licence and so forth, but it also indicates a radically different choice, compared with the Islamic one, as far as the leader's rôle is concerned. The leader is no longer a representative or trustee of God's order on earth, though

[1] Baghdādī, p. 243; Naubakhtī, p. 68.

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without partaking of a prophetic mission and bound to follow the model of the prophet's legislative rôle; rather he is a leader entitled to modify the social order, to give religious sanction to such a change, and to apply it within his own social group. The fact that Bīrūnī claims to have dealt with al-Muqanna' in his book on the Qarmaṭīs is, in our view, no coincidence.

The superficially progressive nature of such a promise to apply Mazdak's laws and institutions, which was not unlike the Qarmaṭīs' community programme, is belied first and foremost by the actual main goal of such uprisings, namely the ruler's removal through military organization and activity. It is also more substantially refuted by the planned experiment's failure to proceed beyond the organizing movement which, externally, exerted pressures and constraints undistinguishable from those of the very official power it was supposed to replace. One cannot neglect the fact that our sources mention a village in the Nakhshab area, probably Bazda, which not only rejected the propaganda of the "white-clad ones" but actually launched a night attack against the rebels, killing their leader. Muqanna"s revenge was merciless and not unlike the reprisals organized by 'Abbāsid troops against insurgents.

On his way back from Baghdad, Muqanna' began to spread his word in Transoxiana, and his followers came to be identified as the wearers of white garments. The link actually consisted in officially adopting Mazdak's line in Transoxiana, in order to enlist the support of those who were known to Islamic heresiographers as Mazdakites, and locally as wearers of white garments. Their first occurrence seems to date to the 6th century A.D., and they apparently mixed in Manichaean, Turkish (particularly in Soghdiana) and trading circles throughout the area and as far as China.[1] In Transoxiana, moreover, propaganda was made easier by the fact that since the Arab conquest that territory had witnessed a number of disturbances, which can be understood only by recognizing the opposition of interests between big landowners and central power on the one hand, and Arab immigrant or local small farmers and traders on the other. In 133/750–1 a man called Sharīk had engineered a revolt in Bukhārā, where he met with the opposition of the local *Bukhār-khudāt's* son, Qutaiba, who helped Abū Muslim in putting down the rising but later deserted in his turn from the 'Abbāsid

[1] Cf. A. Yu. Yakubovskii, "Vosstanie Mukanny-Dvizhenie Lyudei v belykh odeżhdakh" in *Sovetskoe Vostokovedenie*, vol. v (Moscow, 1948), pp. 35–54.

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ranks, perjured Islam and was killed on Abū Muslim's own orders.[1] A brother of his later joined Muqanna"s movement. It should be noted that the leader of the rebellion, Sharīk b. Mahdī, was of Arab origin, and that an attempt was made to extend the rebellion to Samarqand. It thus seems likely that Muqanna' emerged as the leader of a local opposition movement whose extreme fringe was represented by the wearers of white, but whose ranks included, even though in different relations to each other, different segments of the population whose anti-'Abbāsid discontent was often exploited by local Arab leaders. Sharīk's revolt was not the only case in point. Yūsuf al-Barm's Khārijite revolt (160/776–7) in Khurāsān and Bukhārā helped to aggravate a critical situation to Muqanna"s advantage. This rebellion also followed the pattern of the other "Iranian" revolts under consideration. After a few initial victories its leader proclaimed himself a prophet, took over a certain area (Marv-ar-Rūd/Ṭāliqān/Jūzjān), was attacked by Yazīd b. Māzyād acting on the caliph's orders, captured, taken to Baghdad and executed.

The details of Muqanna"s activity are not much different: the village of Subakh near Kish went over to him and the Arab amīr was killed with the help of the local feudal lord. In Bukhārā the local Bukhārkhudāt, called Bunyāt b. Tughshāda, was led to join the revolt by the hope of setting up an independent state. Muqanna' established his headquarters in the mountain area of Sanām, also in the Kish district. Raids were essentially plundering forays, according to our sources, such as the typical raid against the Arab, or at any rate pro-Arab, village of Numijkat or Bumichkat. The movement's poles of resistance also included the town of Narshakh, which did not fall into Arab hands until 159/776, after which the white-clad rebels' stronghold was moved toward Soghdiana and particularly the Zarafshān valley. In Narshakh, the rebels were led by a woman, the widow of one of Abū Muslim's officers, whom the latter had ultimately condemned to death. Such was the only bond of joint anti-'Abbāsid opposition which had led the woman to throw in her lot with Muqanna', without however sharing his religious beliefs. The task of putting down the rebellion fell to a number of governors and generals, ranging from Ḥumaid b. Qaḥṭaba who had a watch kept on the Oxus banks to stop Muqanna' from crossing the river to Jibrā'īl b. Yaḥyā al-Khurāsānī, appointed governor of Samarqand in 159/775–6 to help restore order in Bukhārā, and

[1] Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa'l-nihāya* (Cairo, 1932–9), vol. x, p. 56.

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Mu'ādh b. Muslim who rose to the governorship of Khurāsān after the Khārijite revolt (161/777–8). The latter managed to draft an army with the aid of the local aristocracy and secured the support of Sa'īd al-Harashī, the governor of Herāt. The latter circumstance enabled him to extend operations over a wide region at the same time, thus cutting a number of the rebels' contacts and supply routes, and it led to the siege of the Sanām stronghold by Sa'īd al-Harashī, followed by its capture and the fabulous death of Muqanna' and his women.

Having thus roughly established the facts, we have yet to characterize Muqanna"s followers as something more than just rebels merely opposed to the 'Abbāsids and the big landowners.

Yakubovskii's hypotheses on the white-clad fraternity can be shared insofar as they assume the presence of a peasant element, or rather of peasant organizations, in this case of fortified villages along the Zarafshān and Kashka Daryā valleys, which occasionally joined the new ideology together with their leaders. This peasant element differs from its counterpart in the previous risings, for here they were not merely willing to co-operate, but also organized to the point of suggesting consciousness of their own interests (cotton growing and marketing), jeopardized by the new authority as represented, though not exclusively, by the fiscal system introduced by the Arab administration. The movement also included the mainly urban merchant class to which reference has already been made, to which one might add the craftsmen, if on the basis of existing data one were not inclined to view the distinction between craftsmen and petit-bourgeois urban traders as irrelevant. The situation had obviously not evolved to the point of allowing one to distinguish strictly artisan interests on the one hand and trading interests on the other. It looks as if the urban reality upon which Muqanna"s enterprise was able to prosper may have been of a merchant-artisan type, that is his propaganda struck echoing chords among those city dwellers who were engaged in productive activities and jealous of their local interests, and hence of their autonomy. There was an exception, however, that craftsmen engaged in military production would stay loyal to official authority. Available texts unfortunately do not mention whether Muqanna"s followers had any particular equipment which would enable them to conduct tactically diversified operations and reprisals in the context of some sort of guerrilla warfare. Another element on whose support Muqanna' relied were the Turks, mainly from Soghdiana as some of his Bukhāran generals' names seem to suggest. As already

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mentioned, the Turks had already made their appearance under this label during Isḥāq's revolt. What should be stressed here is that the sources mention Turks, not Turkish peasants or soldiers, as though referring to tribes, just as Turkish tribes acted as vehicles of Manichaean and Nestorian missionary propaganda in the eastern areas of Transoxiana, toward China.

Unlike the uprisings mentioned so far, the Khurramiyya or Khurramdīn movement, which also gave birth to the revolts of Bābak al-Khurramī and Māzyār prince of Ṭabaristān, seems to yield more information on its social components and aims.[1] No movement, however, is defined by our sources with greater vagueness. The very term of Khurramdīn can in fact incorporate a number of meanings ranging from ambiguous though plausible identification with a reformed branch of new Mazdakism adjusted to Islamic pattern, to a vague sort of common denominator for a number of small sects mentioned by heresiographers, such as the Kūdakiyya, Kurdshāhiyya or Ludshāhiyya and others.[2] Some Khurramiyya groups, of course, can be included in the wider Abū Muslimiyya pattern on the basis of an ever increasing assimilation by a group which, though not the basic one, enables one to determine, through its definition, a common identifying theme compared with other heterodox doctrines. This is not to mention the problem of placing the Muḥammira, the red-wearers (*surkh-jāmagān*) or the red-standard bearers (*surkh-'alamān*) who are often identified with the Khurramiyya.

To sum up, by Khurramiyya one means the whole wide movement which operated throughout Iran, with a possible focus in Āzarbāījān and Ṭabaristān. The latter province is mentioned by the heresiographers but not by the historians. This movement came to be variously coloured and named according to the time and place of its transformation into actual outward insurrectional manifestations, marked (not unlike the risings already mentioned) by every feature of organized opposition to centralized government and, by and large, to its representative, the local governor. This also enables one to understand the "conversion" mentioned by some historians, of the Khurramiyya to Qarmaṭism, once the latter seemed likely to gain the upper hand in the struggle for the Arab caliphate.

[1] Cf. Sa'īd Nafīsī, pp. 8–15. The *Tabṣirat al-'awām* gives an "ideological" summary of the movement.

[2] Mas'ūdī, vol. VI, p. 187.

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Not only did a movement such as the Khurramiyya – like the whole Iranian–Mazdaean heresy whose components we are trying to analyse – objectively aid Ismā'īlī propaganda, but the fact that the struggle against the Sulṭān's power and urban or administrative aristocracy waged by Ismā'īlism during the 5th/11th and 6th/12th centuries exploited the same slogans first used by the Iranian heretical movements prevents one from considering the Ismā'īlī movement as unitarian from the point of view of class, even at its inception.

On the Khurramiyya we have a number of sources and abundant if, as usual, biased data. Apart from the heresiographers the most quoted texts are those of Ibn Nadīm, Ṭabarī particularly as regards Bābak's revolt, and Niẓām al-Mulk who also relates some traditions slightly diverging from Ṭabarī's, particularly on Bābak's capture and death.[1]

The very meaning of Khurramiyya appears uncertain to the authors dealing with it. It is usually related to the meaning of the Persian term *khurram* "joyful", so as to stigmatize the movement as "licentious" and justify its dependence on Mazdakism, which was considered as too tolerant from the point of view of ethics. This dependence, however, was occasionally related to Mazdak's wife, Khurrama, held to have given her name to Mazdak's followers after his death. There is also a geographical explanation of the name (from a village called Khurram), which is the least likely interpretation.

Before isolating the movement's basic themes, we should briefly outline its activity, while at the same time touching on a number of lesser, Khurramiyya-linked risings, which can be viewed and interpreted only within the scope of the insurrectional movement promoted in Iran by the Khurramiyya in their different connotations and facets, from 118/736 onward.

In 118/736 Muslim authors mention 'Ammār or 'Umāra b. Yazīd, a Christian convert supporter of Muḥammad b. 'Alī and later of the 'Abbāsids, who upon being sent to Khurāsān by the great Missionary of Kūfa gathered a certain following and began to propagate the Khurramiyya doctrine, pronouncing cult-worship non-mandatory and preaching the common ownership of women. He changed his name to Khidāsh and was ordered to be killed by the governor of Khurāsān, Asad b. 'Abd-Allāh. The Khurramiyya are mentioned in all the risings which occurred after Abū Muslim's death, particularly in 137/754–5 in the mountain areas of Khurāsān. According to some sources the red-

[1] Ibn al-Nadīm, pp. 342–4; Ṭabarī, vol. III, pp. 1201–33; Niẓām al-Mulk, p. 204.

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clad fraternity intervened on Muqanna"s and Yūsuf al-Barm's side in Khurāsān and Transoxiana during al-Mahdī's caliphate. In 162/778–9 the Muḥammira under 'Abd al-Qahhār raised the flag of revolt in Gurgān and were joined by the local Khurramiyya. They proclaimed Abū Muslim's simulated death and, purporting to be led by his son Abu'l-Gharra, they made their way to Ray, while the caliph, al-Mahdī, ordered 'Amr or 'Umar b. 'Alā to scatter them. In the same year the Khurramiyya were in a state of unrest in Iṣfahān, Ya'qūbī claiming that the area was inhabited by Kurds and Persians of humble social extraction.[1] According to Ṭabarī another Muḥammira revolt took place in Gurgān in 180/796–7, their alleged leader being a *zandīq* (Manichaean,) 'Amr b. Muḥammad al-'Umarakī, while Ibn al-Athīr mentions a similar revolt in Khurāsān during the following year.[2] In 192/807–8, simultaneously with Rāfi' b. Laith's revolt in Khurāsān, the Khurramiyya rose in Āzarbāījān, whither Hārūn sent an army of ten thousand horse under 'Abd-Allāh b. Mālik to restore order. In the same year Dīnawarī mentions a Khurramiyya rebellion in the Jibāl, which might coincide with the preceding one.[3] Bābak's insurrection originated about 200/816 and lasted until his death in 223/837–8, a date that does not however mark the end of the movement's military activities. The date attributed to the revolt is no coincidence, occurring as it does at the same time as an alleged deposition of Ma'mūn in Iraq, also the appointment of 'Alī al-Riḍā as heir presumptive and the end of hostilities between the caliph's commander in the field Harthama and his secretary Faḍl b. Sahl because of Harthama's violent death which exasperated the situation in Iraq. One must also mention a famine which occurred in Iran during the following year. The area of operations was the Badhdh district in Āzarbāījān, which could provide Bābak a route of withdrawal to Armenia and the Byzantine territories. The legendary features surrounding the name of Bābak, variously identified as the son of a Nabatean or a descendant of Abū Muslim, as a shepherd and the son of a blind mother, will be dealt with later; suffice it for the time being to touch on the main stages of his military and political career. He made his appearance on the political scene under Jāvīdān, one of the leaders of the rebel movement and a rival of Abū 'Imrān's.[4] He secured the goodwill of Jāvīdān's wife, and after Jāvīdān's death which followed shortly afterwards from wounds inflicted in mysterious cir-

[1] Ya'qūbī, p. 275.
[2] Ṭabarī, vol. III, p. 645; Ibn al-Athīr, vol. VI, p. 109.
[3] Dīnawarī, p. 387.
[4] Cf. Ibn al-Nadīm, p. 343.

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cumstances, the deceased's wife staged an investiture in Bābak's favour and married him with the consent of the members of the sect. Bābak's first action was a large-scale foray against a Muslim village, carried out in a bloodthirsty manner which contrasted with the Khurramiyya's customary gentle and mild habits acknowledged by the sources themselves. His watchword seems to have been: Bābak shall seize the earth, kill the tyrants and restore the religion of Mazdak; he who had been humbled shall be honoured and the humble shall become great. He was practically in control of the whole Badhdh area, while the Arabs had withdrawn to Marāgha; for security reasons he had destroyed villages and towns all around his stronghold. This marked the beginning of a succession of campaigns which Ma'mūn launched against Bābak, led by the governor of Armenia and Āzarbāijān, but the balance of power remained undisturbed for about twenty years, in spite of a few critical moments when central power was in jeopardy. In 217/832, owing to internal strife, the governor of Armenia and Āzarbāijān, 'Alī b. Hishām, joined forces with the rebels and was subsequently defeated and captured by his successor Ujaif b. 'Anbasa. In 218/833 the rising overflowed into Fārs and Kūhistān under 'Alī b. Mazdak, who easily gained control of the region's mountain areas.

Bābak's insurrection was defeated only under al-Mu'taṣim, who entrusted one of the Transoxiana princes, Afshīn (220/835), with the direction of operations. Bābak was betrayed by local dihqāns whom he believed to be his allies and fell into enemy hands. He was handed to Afshīn's troops by Sahl b. Sunbādh, an Armenian prince in 222/836–7, and executed in Sāmarrā (223/837) while his brother and assistant 'Abd-Allāh was delivered to the prince of Ṭabaristān, Ibn Sharvīn, who had him put to death in Baghdad. This rebellion was followed almost immediately in Ṭabaristān by Māzyār's conflict with the governor of Khurāsān, 'Abd-Allāh b. Ṭāhir, as well as, in Āzarbāijān, by the insubordination of Afshīn's brother-in-law Mankjūr, who refused to deliver to the caliph a portion of Bābak's booty. 'Abd-Allāh b. Ṭāhir sent his troops against Māzyār, while Afshīn was accused of inciting the latter to resistance and talking his brother-in-law into not yielding up the treasure, in the belief that any troops sent by the caliph were sure to join the rebels.

Māzyār was put to death in Sāmarrā the following year in front of Bābak's gallows, and Afshīn's trial seemed to be an inquisition purporting to prove his guilt through his alleged false conversion to Islam.

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Whether or not Afshīn had actually engineered a plot is hard to judge on the basis of historical data; it is however noteworthy that the sources ideologically and religiously equate these three figures – Bābak, Māzyār and Afshīn – as upholders of some vague Iranian restoration and defenders of the "white religion" against the "black religion" of Islam.

Rebellion continued even after the major leaders had disappeared: one Maḥmūd, who agitated in 235/849–50 under al-Mutawakkil in the Nīshāpūr area, seems to have started his active opposition by staging a sort of sit-in in front of Bābak's gallows. Revolts clearly labelled as Khurramiyya went on throughout the 3rd/9th century, particularly in the Āzarbāījān–Ṭabaristān areas, without however attaining the same significance as during the early 'Abbāsid period. As already mentioned, the context of Khurramiyya activity seems on the whole easier to determine, compared with other movements.

In the case of Bābak's revolt the presence of a peasant element is beyond doubt; Bābak's allies consistently include dihqāns, identifiable as smallholders in contrast with the big landowners who were the targets of the movement. When dealing with Bābak's first armed expedition, it is said that his men, the dihqāns were unused to war, and learnt the technique of attack during first clashes, and thus became brave. Until the decline of Bābak's fortunes the local dihqāns naturally considered themselves as his allies and he had no objection to their support.

A closer scrutiny of the texts shows that Māzyār's revolts and Afshīn's own alleged betrayal can only be understood by assuming that the movement underwent an involution. The texts more or less accurately mention people of base origins (Bābak himself was allegedly the son of an itinerant oil vendor), but both Bābak's alleged alliance with the emperor of Byzantium, and the fact that his inheritance included a booty large enough to become a bone of contention, as well as the possible support on which Afshīn's brother-in-law might have relied in the area, suggest the existence of interests and intrigues on a higher level compared with those of the Khurramiyya risings before Bābak's time and the rebellions which have been analysed above. To sum up, one might venture to suggest the following interpretation: starting from the hypothesis that both Bābak's and Māzyār's goal consisted in attacking the large Arab estates in the provinces west and south of the Caspian Sea,[1] this goal eventually changed as some sort of

[1] Ṭabarī, vol. III, p. 1269 and pp. 1278–9.

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army was organized and effective control had to be exercised over a given area with a view of supplanting the ancient landed class with a new one, which, however, was not necessarily more amenable to such egalitarian slogans. No clarifying data on the way the area was administered by Bābak are provided by the sources, apart from a reference to his general, Tarkhān, who was captured and killed "while on his way to the village where he lived in the winter", as though taking it for granted that this kind of person had a rôle in the local agricultural structure, while at the same time being called upon at fixed intervals to take part in military operations.[1]

By this we mean that the ideology of the dihqāns, who were the mainstay of most risings in Bābak's time, aimed at and succeeded in exerting on the central government and the big landowners such pressure as to bring about a changing of the guard within the ruling class, without any actual substitution of classes or any real social innovation. Bābak's own programme, to which reference has already been made, partly confirms this, and a further indication should be seen in the subsequent convergence of the Khurramiyya into the Qarmaṭī movement, which also took shape according to a demagogical-revolutionary pattern operating at least roughly in the forefront of the movement, but amounting to no more than a mere change in traditional authority.

From a social point of view Bābak's Khurramiyya revolt enables one to identify a number of features of Iranian society at the time. Before stressing the elements of religious (Iranian, gnostic, Christian) syncretism, reference should be made to the feminist trend which seems to underlie the Khurramiyya movement. One of Mazdak's wives is said to have organized the movement, giving it her own name. Jāvīdān's wife engineered the transfer of power to Bābak, and her rôle received full recognition. Islamic texts mention, if contradictorily, a communistic status of women, and refer to women's right to a second husband, any issue from this second marriage enjoying the same rights as the children born in the first. A particularly striking rule, furthermore, was laid down by Bābak, stating that a man's place of residence should follow the woman's.[2] It is quite likely that this rule rested on more fundamental patrimonial and agricultural considerations, which on the whole must not have been unfavourable to women.

Another factor consists in two anti-Jewish quotations mentioned in

[1] Sadighi, p. 255.

[2] Bal'amī, vol. IV, p. 543.

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the texts. Referring to the Arabs he is being handed to, Bābak tells the dihqān who betrayed him, "You have sold me to these Jews." And when general Afshīn leads his children and wife out of Bābak's stronghold, he comments, "Should I be afraid of these Jews, to keep my wife locked up in a fortress?" In a mainly agricultural and Iranian context, these two incidents seem at any rate peculiar.[1]

Iran's insurrectional landscape would be incomplete without reference to the Khārijite and Zaidite revolts typical of the 'Abbāsid empire of the day, though of course they seem less significant to the purpose of isolating from such movements a possible Iranian common denominator or a possible peculiarity of social background providing fertile soil for any given rising.

Many of the Khārijite slogans and even more of the Zaidite catchwords impregnated with Ma'mūn's triumphant Mu'tazilism and somehow linked to the troubles and internal difficulties of the empire are known to match the official interpretation of such movements, which has been dealt with in every heresiographical text. That is why instead of trying to give as complete as possible a picture of the Zaidite and Khārijite presence in Iran, we shall confine ourselves to a couple of examples: Yaḥyā b. 'Abd-Allāh b. Ḥasan's flight from Iraq to Iran and Ḥamza al-Khārijī's revolt in Sīstān. The former was linked to the foundation of an 'Alid dynasty south of the Caspian Sea, accompanied by Zaidite penetration and slow but constant conversion of the local people to the Zaidite branch of Islam, and the second includes some characteristic features within the development of Khārijite revolts.

Yaḥyā b. 'Abd-Allāh did not reach Iran directly, but spent some time in Yemen, Egypt and Maghrib. Hārūn had a price put on his head. Yaḥyā went to Iraq and then to Ray, and left for Khurāsān where the local governor failed to capture him. He made his way to Transoxiana where a Turkish leader, the *Khāqān*, a secret convert to Islam, gave him his support. Thence he went to Qūmis, to the mountain area of Ṭabaristān, and then to Dailam, where he was welcomed by local lords and began to spread his doctrine with the approval of the local jurisconsults and apparently of al-Shāfi'ī himself. The interesting point is that precisely in Iran Zaidite propaganda enjoyed the orthodox jurists' support. This should not be viewed as a strange coincidence in the history of Iran-mediation between different doctrines growing out of an imperfectly Islamized context; this occurred through law, that is

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 532, 544.

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through a routine of legal administration which was bound to be one of the institutions most likely to exhibit an open and democratic aspect of Islam compared with the old order of things. It indicates one of the ways through which Iran was basically Islamized, and seems to confirm once more the possibility of interpreting the syncretism of certain Irano-Islamic movements of the age as a conscious effort toward the unification of different points of view on the everyday, routine level. This was similar to what orthodox Islam itself was doing in Iran *vis-à-vis* heretical Islam, which was nevertheless recognized and pigeonholed in the classical schemes of *firaq* classification.

Once Faḍl b. Sahl's political activity gave the 'Alids control of the area, the caliph could find no weapon capable of opposing his minister except such juridical opposition as he could muster by obvious arrangement through the Qazvīn, Ray or Hamadān *qāḍīs* led by Abu'l-Bakhtarī Wahb b. Wahb, setting Justān against Yaḥyā by proclaiming Yaḥyā a slave of Hārūn's. Yet an 'Alid presence, more than any other factor, might have provided Iran with an alternative to the caliph, as the obvious result of the old 'Abbāsid propaganda based on the *ahl al-bait* and particularly on the motto "*Muḥammad yā Manṣūr*", that is the slogan in the name of Nafs al-Zakiyya and revenge for the Zaidī martyrs.

The Khārijite revolt (181/797–8 to 213/828–9), which can be practically identified with its leader Ḥamza b. 'Abd-Allāh al-Shārī al-Khārijī's armed activities, is particularly significant as being precisely the rising to which reference is made both when trying to prove an alleged constant heterodoxy of Sīstān within Islam, and when claiming that Khārijite success in the area rested upon some ancient proclivity to certain vague forms of religious strictness which had dovetailed into, and become identified with, the Khārijite creed.

Without going into the problem it should be pointed out, as far as this revolt is concerned, based on the account contained in the *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, that by and large, throughout the heresies considered, Islam appears as the new medium of ancient concepts or needs felt by the local people, who express them in more or less heterodox Islamic terms.[1] This is nothing new in religious history. In Iran's case it becomes more particularly striking, because only by considering such a development in the context of the origin of the movement in question, can one somehow form a picture of the social and religious situation of Iran on the local level, apart from the official catchwords of 'Abbāsid his-

[1] *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, pp. 156–80.

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torians. Any hint at a heritage from the past is therefore a valid step towards a reconstruction of Iranian religiosity which, however undocumented owing to its divergence from the Sāsānian Mazdaean church, and latent at the time of impact with the conquerors' religion, was nevertheless sufficiently vital to warrant the later existence of an Iranian Islam. Such an Iranian Islam, which is all too often confused with Shī'ism, was at any rate strong enough to operate, on the theoretical level, until such time as a new version of the Ismā'īlī message should appear. The *Umm al-kitāb* represents the beginning of this synthesis as well as the link between Ismā'īlism and the Kaisāniyya. Islam in Iran on the operational level created an orthodox Islamic country capable of accepting a heretical superstructure without any shock, almost as the prerogative of a well-established ruling class, such as the Persian administrative class of the following centuries.

The protagonist of the Khārijite revolt was a Sīstānī nobleman, born in a "pagan" family claiming mythical Iranian kings as their ancestors; he after going on the pilgrimage to Mecca returned home ready to start armed operations in the district of Zarang. The rebel's first clash, with Ḥafs b. 'Umar b. Tarka, governor of Zarang, was about to end in a duel between the two leaders but the governor did not accept. Ḥamza addressed his first proclamation to the people and their leaders, bidding them pay no taxes to the Baghdad government, an attitude which was to remain constant throughout the rebellion, while the *khuṭba* continued to be read in the caliph's name.

With a view to securing control of the area, a number of alliances were made between the governor and the local *'ayyārs* or bandits, which led to actual popular risings against the Khārijites and, eventually, to a truce arranged by the governor, Laith b. Faḍl, due to the fact that Laith had to enlist Ḥamza's aid against a man of the people, Ḥarb b. 'Ubaida, supported by Ṭarabī, the outgoing governor. Ḥamza's and Laith's victory secured for Laith, the Khārijites and the local 'ayyārs four years (201–5/816–20–1) of continuous peace, apart from the unrevoked ban on the payment of taxes.

We see here a nobleman leading a revolt against central authority and meeting with the active opposition of a number of officials belonging to the structure upon which caliphal power rested. The latter availed themselves of catchwords as demagogical as his own, or they even concocted so-called popular uprisings which they exploited to their own ends; their goal was mere conservation of the *status quo*, while the

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Khārijites claimed an autonomous, and hence more equitable, policy, which found partial expression in non-payment of taxes to the local administration, which on the other hand was not considered in itself hostile. This background which does not much differ from the Muqanna' rebellion, for example, does not include religious syncretism and hence the convergence of native elements. Compared with contemporary revolts, the Khārijite movement in Sīstān was subdued by the central government after Ḥamza's death, though some outbursts of independent vitality were in evidence up to at least Ṣaffārid times. It might be qualified as more aristocratic than previous revolts, thanks to its wholehearted adoption of an imported scheme as a medium of protest.

This latter statement should be justified by a restrictive definition of heresy in Islam. Orthodox Islam always proved capable of including different elements on the religious-theoretical level, and allowed a practical application of them which might by itself either prove or refute their validity, without jeopardizing the whole social and political structure. An example of this was Mu'tazilism under al-Ma'mūn. When faced with the need of making a choice, which could not be avoided without prejudice to its official qualification, heresy always led in practice to rigidity and inability to assimilate historical data. As a result, what was meant as an innovating experiment turned into the medium of reaction and fanaticism, even when in defeat, the faction in question appeared in the victim's rôle.

Khārijism and Ismā'īlism are but two of the many obvious examples which one might quote in this connection.

A strictly religious interpretation of the movements in question should not adopt the single label of extremism-Shī'ism-Iranianism. One should rather look for a unifying background by isolating the constant components and only subsequently relating them to a possible "Iranian-heterodox" religious typology.

We shall therefore try to isolate a few motifs and consider their operation within the specific context of the heresies in question, consciously adopting a method that will restrict the field of enquiry and enable us to determine a few essential points basic to a definition of these religious forms' Iranian or non-Iranian character.

The goals of such an analysis ultimately reflect a search for a lunar kind of Islamic component and a solar type, or Iranian component. This qualification of the field of enquiry immediately leads us to choose

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a fundamental motif, which is at the same time a constant factor in the movements under review: the colour motif.

In more than one context Islam is defined as "the black religion" in contrast with "the white religion" which should be revived, and which our sources oversimplify into the religion of Zoroaster, often described by heresiographers, on the other hand, as the religion of Mazdak.[1]

Black is the colour of night, and black is the 'Abbāsid standard raised by Abū Muslim when openly proclaiming his *da'wa* in the 'Abbāsid family's name. Black is also the colour of the Mahdī, who in the fullness of time will bring justice upon earth, which in religious psychology is tantamount to accepting a positive view of death as the rebirth of true life (the Mahdī's justice). This is at the same time a deliberate decision to hide and conceal oneself, to disappear while persisting (like the moon) and waiting for an opportunity, which is to be determined by an alien, solar active factor, to come back to a new life and shape.

On the other hand, black is also the colour of mourning, particularly according to the Shī'a, and black were the garments worn by Bābak's followers when, according to Abū Tammān's verses, they seemed to want to conceal their secret from the curious, veiling themselves like the moon while waiting for its new cycle.[2] Black was the sheep that Afshīn strangled every week (for so he was accused), cutting it in two halves so that he could pass between them before eating the meat.

It is no coincidence that black, in Islam, should be complemented by green, the classical colour of Islam which is also a night-colour, a colour of rest and waiting, connected with the female element, with milk and the mother's womb. This is the 'Alid colour, and at the same time the wonderful colour of Chinese silk brought back by Bihāfarīd, and of the veil covering Muqanna"s splendour.[3] It is the colour linked to the concept of "*regressus ad uterum*", as well as to the food (liver) eaten by Bihāfarīd during his "apprenticeship" leading to his birth (*ẓuhūr*).

The most interesting point is precisely the connection between China/East and green in Bihāfarīd's case, which merely seems to focus a mysterious, magical feminine origin, to which one has to appeal before proving worthy of one's new mission. China is also the place where one learns art, and materializes its rôle in green silk, which provided Bihāfarīd with the need to wear a veil while waiting for the moment of appearance. Muqanna"s veil acts partly in a similar, though

[1] Cf. Ṭabarī, vol. III, p. 1311, and Baghdādī, p. 251.
[2] E. G. Browne, vol. I, p. 330.
[3] Bīrūnī, vol. II, p. 211.

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less complex, fashion. The sight of the divine essence can only filter through thanks to a passive, feminine reflection, inasmuch as it fulfils the primary task of reception and transmission, by adjusting this function to a cycle of preparation and appearance in accordance with the lunar pattern which we suggest.

In other traditions connected with Muqanna', anyhow, green is replaced by a golden mask, gold implying already a transition to white, that is towards inversion from a lunar, passive, feminine situation to a solar, male, active one.[1]

Gold fulfils in our context a rôle similar to red. Red, which in the heretical movements in question is often represented by metal, is still a genetically feminine colour, but in its active stage, at the time of unfolding, it leads to the opposite principle, represented in Iran by white. The need of focusing the component of creation in its feminine form it also reflected in the blood covering Bābak's naked body as he slept under the tree, and in the wine drunk by Bābak during his investiture at the head of the movement.

The fact that whole movements, such as the Muḥammira or Mubayyiḍa, are identified with a colour is less readily attributable to a general principle. Red, however, appears in various cultures as the colour symbolizing a break with tradition and an urge towards not only a new life, but a new world as promised by the Mahdī, verified and materialized in time. As far as our analysis is concerned, it is red, in connection with gold, which leads to white, the seminal-solar, daytime and masculine colour *par excellence*.

Grey-white is the colour of the Mahdī's horse, the first concrete manifestation of future life, a fire- and death-resistant phoenix-salamander. Such is the mount which Bihāfarīd will ride when, according to his followers, he returns in the fullness of time.

What seems most worthy of analysis is the white dove into which Abū Muslim was turned while waiting for the Mahdī. This is neither the normal symbol of the soul and the spirit, nor an image of the immortal ambrosia or vital sperm which knows neither corruption nor death. White seems to be something more – a symbol showing the way followed by different doctrines such as Islam and the old Iranian religion in integrating and building up a single, globally interpretable religious structure.

The religious contents of the movements in question are hardly ever

[1] Ibn Khallikān, vol. II, pp. 205–6.

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reflected in our sources by any theory at all. One is faced instead with a number of facts which should provide the historian with the opportunity of formulating a judgment, and the heresiographer with a method of classification. Hence, as noted at the beginning of this essay, since the historical sources reflect the central authority's "truth", their basic judgment is bound to be negative and biased. The heresiographer's classification is, however, even more schematic and based on standard, officially formulated definitions aimed at placing all heretical movements within a set frame which separates the just from the false and lays down the boundaries of the Islamic community.

This is nothing more than one could expect after assuming the need of safeguarding orthodoxy from a threatening heretical development. What does seem typical of Islamic heresiography is its acting as negative propaganda; the heresiographer's self-appointed task seems to consist in teaching what a good Muslim should not do or believe, rather than pointing out where heretics go wrong and lose all hopes of salvation.

The fact therefore that Shahristānī includes the Abū Muslimiyya among Mazdakite-inspired groups while the Muḥammira and Mubayyiḍa fall under the wider definition of ghulūw merely helps us to choose the general guidelines, to identify in practice the connections between "white" and "black" religion, while the ideological elements typical of such elements are not clarified.[1] One is left at any rate with the facts and descriptions with which Islamic historiographers always accompanied their subject-matter, and which provide one with the material to be divided up into factors of masculine and feminine derivation, in accordance with the interpretation of the masculine–feminine dichotomy which is generally accepted in most psycho-religious analysis.

In Bihāfarīd's movements his proof of his own prophecy consisted in a version of the *mi'rāj* equivalent to communication with the divine level, which he renounced in order to fulfil his prophetic mission. The typology of the mi'rāj seems to assume a solar context, in which ascent acts as the masculine, dynamic element, and is performed twice by the prophet in question: at the start of his mission and at the end of his life. Descent upon earth, which is also dual, merely serves to prove the assumption's reliability, which is stressed by insistence on the numeral seven. Bihāfarīd spent seven years in China and handed down seven prayers to his followers. Sunbādh the Magian also chose the sun as the new *qibla*, and set out to destroy the Ka'ba, while the notion of

[1] Shahristānī, vol. II, p. 87.

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returning at the end of time turns up again in the legend of Muqanna', whose spirit is supposed to be embodied in a grey man returning to be lord of the earth on the usual grey horse.

Messianic elements also appear as a constant of orthodox Islamic ideology, and it is hard to determine to what extent they dovetail into an Iranian vision of rebirth through the sperm which is to recreate life, and to what extent they are merely one of the many expressions of the Islamic concept of alternating phases of death and life, of *ġaiba* and ẓuhūr. As a matter of fact, both Abū Muslim and Muqanna', destined as they were by legend to share in the Mahdī's mission, either as a substitute (Muqanna') or in a threefold manifestation (Mahdī, Mazdak and Abū Muslim) of the Mahdī himself, appear to be immersed in a feminine, lunar kind of religious reality. Abū Muslim did not ascend to heaven, and hid instead on the mountains near Ray waiting for the resurrection; or he concealed himself in the Mahdī's copper castle.

To sum up, one should go back to the model handed down by primitive Islam for subsequent elaboration, transplanted into Iran and all too simplistically identified with "Iranian religiosity", that is, to the legend of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya with its lunar, feminine principle and situation. He too disappeared, hid in the mountains or rather in a cave where he waited for the day of judgment; he too appeared as a mirror of the Mahdī's, rather than as the Messiah himself; he too, like Abū Muslim, was assimilated to an angelic category of creatures; he too seemed to choose apparent death and negation of his own individuality to return into the earth, indeed into the cosmological egg, thence to come forth at the end of time, when the very concept of individual identification will have lapsed into desuetude.

The extremism with which our movements are accused grew out of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafiyya himself, or rather out of his legend, and it should be stressed that the "extreme" element was derived from Semitic Islam and was transplanted to the texture of Iranian religiosity in modified form, in accordance with our hypothetical analysis, as an alternative or a complement to Iranian "solarity". Thematic and symbological identification between the 'Alid and an ancient, Iranian mythical figure did in fact explicitly occur in eastern Iran; but this was, significantly enough, not an identification between Muḥammad and Jamshīd, or Farīdūn, or Garshāsp, but between Muḥammad and Zaḥḥāk, the prisoner and at the same time the guardian of the egg. The most glaring expression of Muqanna"s lunar, feminine context is the

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story of the moon which he caused to rise out of the well in which he had placed a phial of mercury. This miracle should be related to the other miracle of his public appearance in full daylight, arranged so that the dazzling rays reflected by a system of mirrors should give his followers a measure of his own divine nature. We have before us a reflected, passive divinity, just as the moon he caused to rise out of the well did not differ from the light of the sun whose reflection Muqanna' appropriated.

There seems to be no point in insisting on the magical attitudes which accompany the protagonists of the movements in question; suffice it to mention food. Reference has already been made to Bihāfarīd's miraculous food. The marriage between Bābak and Jāvīdān's wife becomes official when she offers him a sprig of basil. Muqanna' gives his wives poison. Bābak's investiture is marked by a banquet, and the sacrificed animal's meat eaten by Afshīn is one of the charges he will have to answer. Bābak's biography, too, is marked by wine; wine was drunk by his father while staying with Bābak's mother; there was wine at the banquet organized to celebrate his appointment, and Jāvīdān had Bābak's mother buy wine on the day when he chose him as his servant. A similar magical rôle is attributed to the father of Bābak singing in a foreign language, or to Bābak's making music, if only by playing the drum during his normal, legendary span of life as an orphan and a shepherd. All such elements stress, in our texts, Islam's dislike for all alien forms viewed as disrupting the fundamental relation which is supposed to be set up between God and his creatures. At any rate, this sketchy review of motifs, or rather constant factors of these movements, which attempts to go beyond the heresiographical stereotypes of ghulūw, *tanāsukh* (transmigration) and sexual sin, would seem inadequate if it did not touch upon another theme, that of the one-eyed person, which is also linked to the feminine principle and to colour. Even if the female presence is a constant element in our movements the one-eyed person shows up in contexts characterized by a particularly strong female presence, as in the episodes of Muqanna' and Bābak.

Bābak's mother, the object of a strange passion conceived by his father, the stranger, had only one eye.[1] She acted as the nurse and the guardian of the orphaned child, before giving him up to Jāvīdān, but in Bābak's life the maternal rôle was carried on by Jāvīdān's wife, who loved him, prepared his succession and provided him, so to speak, with

[1] Ibn al-Nadīm, p. 343.

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the ointment of investiture, by stating that the late Jāvīdān's spirit had moved into his young servant, Bābak. The woman was the exoteric, eloquent element, in contrast with Bābak who merely accepted and, according to texts, spoke with difficulty and stuttered. Bābak is therefore he who speaks through a woman, and is silent in his quality as a guide.

Muqanna' was one-eyed, and according to some sources, stuttered too. His one-eyedness is the exoteric motive of his chosen mask. We have thus a male figure and a female figure sharing this feature, but the fact that Muqanna' is "the veiled one" *par excellence* enables one to classify him, too, in a feminine category, not only because of his rôle, to which reference has already been made, but also because he willingly wears a mask, thus changing his features, and chooses the mystery of his own person as an irreversible fact, becoming a woman from the point of view of symbology.

Generally speaking, a one-eyed person represents a negative factor: one-eyed and blind people are not allowed to perform sacrifices, for instance. But when the negative datum is projected on to an extremely wide area, it represents the Almighty, or rather the Omnipotence linked to the nature represented by the one-eyed person and identified, like him, with violent manifestations such as a storm, a volcano, a thunderbolt, the most obvious example being provided by Odin.

The one-eyed person is however also the hero who willingly gives up an eye in order to penetrate the inner truth of things, that is to provide himself with a strength which is no longer merely natural, but rather magical. That is the force which one acquires by perceiving the essence of things and not stopping at their outer appearance. This clarifies the case in question, together with the fact that the one-eyed person often turns up in hendiadys with some other figure, disabled or lacking a limb, a typical instance being the case of Horatius Cocles and Mutius Scaevola. In our context two disablements, stuttering and partial blindness, coexist in the same figure.

The fact of stuttering might be linked to the importance of the spoken word as a fundamental factor of prophecy and a necessary requisite of the law-making prophet. If however eloquence is a positive fact in orthodoxy, i.e. exotericism, it becomes negative in the opposite field of esotericism. Here the prophetic rôle, which is mediation between the form of life and its essence, between that which is visible and the invisible, is entrusted to the silent, the non-speaking, the *imām-i ṣāmit*

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who does not speak, in the tradition of the Shī'a, to 'Alī as opposed to Muḥammad in the mystical, gnostic tradition.

An intimate relation probably exists, therefore, between seeing the invisible, not saying the possible, while waiting for the intrinsic truth of things, and the feminine, lunar rôle of suspension performed by Muqanna' or Bābak.

On a more precisely factual level, one can but hazard a few hypotheses. Having accepted the fact that Muqanna' does not ascend to the divine level by a form of mi'rāj, one must at all events find a link between the spiritual and human levels, there being no rebirth of the protagonist, as there is for instance in Bihāfarīd's case. Hence the person accidentally characterized by this natural element (this being the first possible interpretation of one-eyedness) is changed into someone who has an esoterical, magical vision of reality, which is the second way of interpreting the same phenomenon.

Alternatively, the one-eyed person (the eye that does not see, but which can be unsealed, its power thus becoming unleashed) represents, from the iconographical point of view, the female matrix itself, and the hypotheses mentioned above should be viewed as the effect, not as the motive of this fact. Here one should however proceed mainly on the basis of analogy with other mythological forms and different cultures, where the "deformation of the eye" seems to fulfil this very rôle.

A final hypothesis might connect the whole field of enquiry with an interpretation capable of orienting the geographical characterization of the eastern Iranian area, in which the protagonist operates towards a search for the reasons why the land of the Ariamaspoi, or for that matter of the Amazons, should have been related to Alexander's Iranian campaigns, or towards a search for any interactions and interminglings of local elements of an existing divinity, or a particular cult, having its Islamized epigones in Muqanna' and Bābak, though in a different form.

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